

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /056 W
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R 141520Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IS
SUBJECT: FREE CENTER JOINS DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE (DMC)

1. YIGAL YADIN RECEIVED A SIGNIFICANT BOOST JANUARY 13
WITH THE DECISION OF THE FREE CENTER PARTY TO JOIN HIS
DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE. THE MERGER FOLLOWED INTENSE
SECRET DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN YADIN AND FREE CENTER LEADER
SHMUEL TAMIR IN WHICH IT WAS AGREED THAT THE FREE CENTER'S
TWO KNESSET MEMBERS, TAMIR AND AKIVA NOFF, WOULD RESIGN
THEIR SEATS BY MID-FEBRUARY AND THE FREE CENTER WOULD RE-
CEIVE APPROPRIATE REPRESENTATION ON ALL DMC BODIES PEND-
ING PARTY ELECTIONS IN MARCH.

2. THE KNESSET SEATS VACATED BY THE FREE CENTER WILL
REVERT TO THE LIKUD, THE BLOC FROM WHICH THE FREE CENTER
BOLTED LAST OCTOBER. THE FREE CENTER'S SACRIFICE WILL BE
ACTUALLY GREATER THAN FIRST APPEARED. INDEPENDENT MK
BINYAMIN HALEVY, WHO EARLIER ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTION OF
JOINING THE DMC (TEL AVIV 259), WAS FORMERLY A LIKUD MK.
THE NEXT MAN ON THE LIKUD LIST IS BARUCH BARAK, A FREE CENTER
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POLITICIAN. THUS, HALEVY'S RESIGNATION FROM THE KNESSET
WOULD MEAN THE FREE CENTER STANDS TO LOSE (AND THE LIKUD
WOULD PICK UP) THREE SEATS BY ITS MERGER WITH THE DMC.
IL 1.7 MILLION CAMPAIGN MONEY AND THE TELEVISION AND
RADIO TIME ALLOTTED BY THE GOVERNMENT TO THE FREE CENTER
WILL ALSO REVERT TO THE LIKUD SINCE THE FREE CENTER IS
DISSOLVING AS A KNESSET FACTION. YADIN HAS REPORTEDLY

EXHORTED THE LIKUD "ON MORAL GROUNDS" NOT TO USE THESE FUNDS FOR ITS OWN CAMPAIGN. OF COURSE, THE THREE NEW LIKUD MEMBERS (TWO HERUTNIKS, INCLUDING A DRUZE, AND ONE LIBERAL ARE NEXT ON THE LIST AFTER BARAK) WILL ENJOY ONLY A SHORT TENURE BEFORE THE KNESSET ELECTION. THE KNESSET IS EXPECTED TO RECESS EARLY IN APRIL.

3. ALTHOUGH THE FREE CENTER HAS PAID A HIGH PRICE TO BECOME PART OF THE DMC, MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE IT HAD LITTLE CHOICE. THE POLLS SHOW IT WOULD PROBABLY HAVE BEEN HARD PUT EVEN TO HOLD ITS OWN IN THE MAY ELECTION. WITH THE MERGER, TAMIR IS VIRTUALLY ASSURED OF A KNESSET SEAT AND MAY EVEN WIND UP A MINISTER IN THE NEXT GOVERNMENT IF THE DMC BECOMES PARTNER TO A COALITION -- A PROSPECT THAT IS INCREASINGLY LIKELY. IN A CONVERSATION JANUARY 14, MK NOFF ASSURED US THAT THERE WERE "NO GUARANTEES" RE A PLACE ON THE DMC KNESSET LIST -- THAT EVERYONE WILL HAVE TO TAKE HIS CHANCES IN THE PARTY'S SECRET BALLOTING -- BUT THAT HE THOUGHT HIS OWN PROSPECTS FOR A SAFE SPOT ON THE LIST WERE GOOD AND THAT TAMIR'S WERE, OF COURSE, EVEN BETTER. NOFF BELIEVES THAT THE DMC LINEUP IS NOW COMPLETE, WITH NO MORE MERGERS LIKELY. HE SAID THAT THE DMC'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH SHULAMIT ALONI'S CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT ARE DEFINITELY OVER AND THAT THE ILP, AS AN OLD ESTABLISHED PARTY WITH MANY OF ITS OWN INSTITUTIONS AND A SOLID, IF SMALLER BASE OF SUPPORT, WILL NOT DISMANTLE ITSELF TO JOIN THE DMC. (COMMENT: HE MIGHT HAVE ADDED THAT YADIN'S INTEREST IN SUCH A MERGER IS ALSO SLIGHT BECAUSE OF THE ILP'S PARTICIPATION IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RABIN GOVERNMENT AND ITS IDENTIFICATION WITH THE OLD ORDER). NOFF ALLOWED FOR THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE MERCURIAL ARIK SHARON MIGHT YET GET ON THE BANDWAGON.

4. MEANWHILE, EFFORTS BY THE ILP TO FORM ANOTHER CENTER GROUPING WITH THE CRM TO COMPETE WITH THE DMC SEEM TO HAVE RUN AGROUND. ILP LEADER MOSHE KOL WAS QUOTED AS TELLING THE PARTY'S EXECUTIVE "I DON'T THINK THERE WILL BE A LIBERAL CENTER...WE'VE GOT TO MAKE PREPARATIONS TO RUN INDEPENDENTLY."

5. IT HAS JUST BEEN ANNOUNCED THAT ISRAEL'S SUPREME COURT HAS DECIDED THAT THE ILP'S RESIGNATION FROM THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT RPT NOT VALID AND THAT THE NRP'S RESIGNATION IS EFFECTIVE. COMMENT: THE DECISION HURTS THE ILP CONSIDERABLY. IT NOT ONLY REMOVES THE LAST FAINT CHANCE OF AN ILP-DMC MERGER BUT ITS INEFFECTIVE EFFORTS TO QUIT THE COALITION MAKES THE PARTY, OR MORE PRECISELY ITS LEADERSHIP, LOOK PATHETICALLY INEPT.

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